



## GES Preschool Program Thrives



**Superintendent's Message**  
**Dr. David Daigneault**

Grenada Elementary School's preschool program has made remarkable strides since its inception in the 2016-2017 school year. Initially starting with just three classes of four-year-olds, the program now proudly serves 70 three-year-olds and 100 four-year-olds, marking significant growth and success.

The preschool program follows the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) guidelines and utilizes a hybrid approach to the OWL curriculum and MS Beginnings. Engaging in hands-on activities, students participate in special events and field trips to ensure that learning is not only age-appropriate but also fun. Last year, Pre-K students began with an average score of 440 on their MKAS assessment and ended the year with an impressive 656. It's noteworthy that kindergarten readiness requires a score of 530, and our preschool students significantly surpassed that benchmark.

In Spring 2024, the Mississippi Department of Education conducted a monitoring visit to current providers in the Grenada Early Learning Collaborative. The results highlighted the program's consistent excellence, achieving a 100% rating for several years due to high scores in CLASS, MKAS2, and CELA. This success has positioned the Grenada Early Learning Collaborative third in the state of Mississippi.

Mr. Cole Surrell, Elementary Academic Coordinator, reflects on the program's growth: "When I began in the 2018-2019 school year, our preschool program was limited to just two classes for three-year-olds and four classes for four-year-olds due to space constraints. However, with the addition of the new third-grade wing at the 3-5 building, we've expanded to five classes each for both age groups. This significant growth has been crucial in preparing our students for kindergarten."

This expansion not only accommodates more students but also enhances the learning environment. With smaller class sizes and more diverse educational experiences, children receive individualized attention, fostering their social and cognitive development. This increase in capacity is vital for meeting the growing demand for early childhood education.

**See "Preschool"**  
**Continued on page 2**

## Building a Dynasty with 3 Years of 'A' Ratings



**Superintendent Dr. David Daigneault unveils a large "A" in recognition of Grenada School District's standing with the Mississippi Department of Education.**

**By Benjamin Leatherman**  
**GSD Reporter**

The 2023-2024 school year marks the 3rd year in a row of an A rating for Grenada School District. In sports, if you win a championship three years in a row, you're declared a dynasty. A scholastic dynasty is certainly what district Superintendent Dr.

David Daigneault, the board of trustees, and staff of over 600 are building in Grenada County.

Overall, Grenada School District scored 714 points, ranking 29th out of 144 school districts statewide, and in the top 20% of all districts in Mississippi. These achievements are driven by encouraging students to

participate in events both inside and outside of the classroom. Giving every student an opportunity to succeed creates independent and motivated individuals that contribute to society as a whole.

That success is quite evident in Grenada Elementary School's 5th-grade Science students—they are ranked #2 in the state. In fact, the top-10 across grades and subjects are full of Grenada students. The 4th-grade English Language Arts (ELA) students are #5 in the state; 4th-grade Math are #6; 3rd-grade Math are #9; and 3rd-grade ELA are #9.

As you can see, Grenada's elementary students are performing phenomenally. They received their 4th A rating, and are ranked in the top 10% of all middle and elementary schools in Mississippi. Grenada Middle School continues to maintain their B rating while making improvements in reading proficiency, math proficiency, and science proficiency. The highlight for the middle school is their 8th-grade Math students who ranked #18 in the state.

Grenada High School teaches its students to turn this early academic success into promising careers where they can choose from different paths like the Career and

Technical Education (CTE) path or the Middle College path. These innovative curriculums have led GHS to its 2nd straight A rating and a rank of #39 in the state, moving up 26 spots from last year, and into the top 17% statewide.

The scores and rankings above are derived from the Mississippi Academic Assessment Program, commonly referred to as MAAP. The current format began in 2016 and is designed to measure student achievement in (ELA), Mathematics, Science, and US History. Students are assessed in grades 3 through 8 in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics, grades 5 and 8 Science, Algebra I, Biology I, English II, and US History. The results of all MAAP assessments provide information to be used for the improvement of student achievement.

**See "Dynasty"**  
**Continued on page 2**

## 2024 GHS Homecoming Queen

(Photo right)

**The 2024 GHS Homecoming Queen is Miss Naima Reed. (back, l to r) GHS Principal Emily Tindall, Pastor Johnnie Reed (father of the queen), GHS Queen Miss Naima Reed, 2023 Queen Miss Jayla Myers, and Superintendent Dr. David Daigneault, (front, l to r) Children of the court, Mister Easton Henson, and Miss Jane Katherine Conrad**



Photo by Torrance Studios

# Inaugural Math Relay for GMS “Dynasty”

Continued from page 1



Jayce Baggatt, Arionna Miller, and Porter Hilmus worked to complete math problems during the relay.

By Tammie Cavanaugh  
Communicator Contributor

Recently, sixth-grade students participated in a unique review to prepare for their math nine-weeks test: a math relay. The track around the football field was transformed into a relay course with seven stations—four dedicated to math problems and three featuring sports activities, including jump rope, bean-bag toss, and basketball dribbling.

Math teachers Mrs. Clark, Mrs. Johnson, and Ms. Rutherford divided

their classes into four smaller teams. Each team raced to the first math station, where they worked both individually and collaboratively to complete eight problems. Once they finished, the team leader submitted their answers to the station lead for verification. If any answers were incorrect, the team had to rework those problems. Once all answers were confirmed correct, the team ran to the jump rope station, where each member completed ten jumps before the next teammate could go. This relay continued until all teams completed all

resilience and adaptability, which are essential traits for future success.”

She continues, “Investing in Pre-K programs is investing in the future; children who attend early education are more likely to excel academically and socially throughout their lives. Preparing for kindergarten involves fostering a love for learning and ensuring children feel safe and supported.” Numerous studies have demonstrated that children who participate in quality Pre-K programs exhibit better academic performance and stronger social skills compared to their peers who do not. By creating a nurturing environment that encourages exploration and curiosity, early education plays a crucial role in helping children transition smoothly into formal schooling.

The Grenada School District is thankful for this foundational program that has clearly enhanced the lives of our youngest children in the community. It lays a firm foundation for the rest of their lives, ensuring they are well-prepared for future academic success. Our commitment to this program promises to foster continued growth and excellence in early childhood education.

## “Preschool”

Continued from page 1

Mr. Surrell adds, “The foundational skills they acquire, from navigating the halls to managing the cafeteria, give them a real advantage when they reach kindergarten, often after two years in our school environment. Last year, our MKAS Kindergarten scores were the highest ever at Grenada Elementary School, and I am confident that our Pre-K program is the key contributor to this success.”

These foundational experiences equip children with essential life skills that extend beyond academics. Learning to interact with peers, understand routines, and adapt to a school setting prepares them for future challenges. The impressive MKAS Kindergarten scores underscore the effectiveness of this early education, demonstrating a strong correlation between early exposure and later academic success.

Mrs. Kim Ezelle, Coordinator for our Preschool program, adds, “Early childhood education is the key to unlocking every child’s potential, laying a foundation for lifelong learning and success. Research consistently shows that early educational experiences significantly impact a child’s cognitive and emotional development. Programs that focus on early learning not only enhance academic skills but also foster

seven stations.

Assistant Principal Mrs. Bloodworth awarded ribbons to the first, second, and third place winners. Additionally, the first-place class for each time slot earned the honor of keeping a trophy in their classroom for a specified period.

A big thank you to the math teachers for organizing the relay, as well as the helpers: Ms. Tina Lott-Riaz, Ms. Centria Lott, Mr. Jeff Hollingsworth, Mr. Lewis Jones, Mr. Jasmon Golliday, Mrs. Robin Fair, and the high school National Honor Society students.

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Grenada’s administration has maintained a consistent message since the first MAAP scores were released for the 2016-2017 school year. While proud of their B rating, Dr. Daigneault was clear that ‘good enough’ is never enough. GSD followed that by growing by 27 points overall in 2017-2018 and achieving another B. In 2018-2019 the district as a whole was again just shy of an A, but Grenada Elementary School posted their first A rating. ‘18-’19 marked the beginning of GES’s current streak of A’s.

In the spring of 2020, when the current seniors were only in the 7th grade, the school year was disrupted by the pandemic, and MAAP scores weren’t graded the same. While education across the nation declined, Grenada achieved some of the top rankings in the state, albeit without a letter grade.

When standard reports resumed in the 2021-2022 school year, Grenada School District’s first ever A rating was more than a grade. It was a dream and a vision driven by the entire community. One that strives to make children feel good—to smile—every single day. Now, for the third straight year the bus drivers, cafeteria workers, custodial workers, security officers, teachers, coaches, parents, and principals have lived this dream and have built a dynasty of success.

## Charger Football and Cheer Visit TGT News for Homecoming



TGT(The Green Top) News entertained visitors on Homecoming Friday during their weekly COW (Class of the Week) broadcast. (l to r) Videographer/Counselor Carrie Housel, Host/Discovery Lab Director David Tipton, Charger Cheerleader Leah Briscoe, football players Bryson Waugh and Ryan Williams

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# Alumni Spotlight: Audri Johnson



Photo by Ben Leatherman

GSD Superintendent Dr. David Daigneault congratulates 2012 Grenada graduate and Grammy winner Audri Johnson.

By Ben Leatherman  
GSD Reporter

We sat down with Grenada native Audri Johnson, better known as Lady Audri, who returned to her roots to share her journey from local talent to Grammy-Winning engineer. She made history receiving a Grammy for Best Roots Gospel Album as engineer and mixer of “The Urban Hymnal,” Tennessee State University’s Aristocrat of Bands album for the 65th annual grammy awards in February of 2023. This remarkable achievement deepened her connection to her hometown, where her musical journey began.

Seeing her dad on a CD cover initially inspired her to start recording—he, along with his siblings and other

family members, formed gospel groups Decisions & Saved by Grace. Johnson’s father grew up in Oakland, MS, where he became the drummer at their home church, Pilgrim’s Rest C.O.G.I.C., and later became the drum captain in the Coffeeville High School Marching Band. Her mother grew up in Grenada, where she sang in the choir at her dad’s church, Mt. Olive Pentecostal Holiness Church. Johnson credits both her parents’ singing talents for her love for music. Perhaps she was born to record.

Audri played trumpet while in the Grenada Marching Band. She credits the band directors and the band’s culture as an early influence, as she started recording music in the sixth grade—imitating popular music and honing her craft.

However, she struggled with the decision to pursue a music career. Johnson was enrolled as a nursing student for three years. She knew that she could have a secure job as a nurse just like her mother.

Then she took stock of her life, assessed her priorities and her passion for music. She made the leap and re-enrolled at Delta State University’s Delta Music Institute (DMI) in Cleveland, where she earned her Bachelor’s of Science degree in Entertainment Industry Studies with a Concentration of Entrepreneurship. Her family recognized the passion in her new path, and Audri felt like it would be a slap in the face to have so many musical talents and not use them for God’s glory.

After graduating, Audri became administrative assistant and was later promoted to studio manager at the DMI. During her time there, she began to develop her networking skills and engineering, as she was tasked with giving potential students and other guests a tour of the studios and engineering guest artists’ records. She took time after hours to become more familiar with the equipment. She says If you don’t have good work ethic, you’re not going to be a good person to work with. They will hire a less talented person.

After winning her first Grammy, she had the opportunity to work with Motown Gospel artist, Me’Kayla. Johnson engineered Me’Kayla’s Prelude EP.

Audri Johnson isn’t the first from Grenada to record with Motown. Eddie “Chank” Willis grew up in Grenada and recorded multiple hits as part of Motown’s house-band The Funk Brothers. Audri reminisced about writing a paper on Motown and was amazed that a person from Grenada could record with so many groups that changed the face of

music across the nation.

Audri draws inspiration from the past, but she also leans on the mentors that have helped her along the way. Currently she records with a company, Tymple, owned by her mentor Sir the Baptist. They’ve just put out a new album, “The Baptist,” and Lady Audri is featured on the single One Hundred.



<https://unitedmasters.com/m/the-baptist-1>

When she’s back in Grenada, Audri reflects on ways she can inspire children and improve her community. She hopes to one day create her own program that teaches kids how to record music.

For anyone, of any age, interested in recording, her number one piece of advice is to imitate what you hear and study the greats. Learn as much as you can about DAWs, or the digital audio workstations. If you’ve got music in your head, don’t be afraid to start. Grab a phone or tablet and get your hands on a free tool like Garage Band, and go have fun.

## GCTC Students Visited by Wyotech



Photo by Meg Newcomb

Wyotech Representative, Jaime Ross (center), spoke with Advanced Students (l to r) Ashton Evans, Jackson Byford, Joseph Gentry, Ross, Bryson Waugh, Aiden Tharpe, and Garrett Clayton at GCTC. Ross explained Wyotech’s program and how to enroll, along with scholarship information.



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# GES 3-5 Celebrates Reading with Thrilling Read-a-Thon



(l to r) Johnathan Mister and Brysen Surrell welcome students to Camp Reads-A-Lot.

By Carol Tharpe  
GSD Administrator

Each year, after the District Capacity Assessment (DCA), Grenada Elementary School 3-5 eagerly anticipates a cherished tradition that marks the end of DCA testing and celebrates the joy of reading—an event known as the Read-a-Thon. Now in its fifth year, this occasion transforms the school into a haven for book lovers, featuring cozy blankets, snacks, and the camaraderie of friends. Every nine weeks, Grenada Elementary School 3-5 ignites a passion for reading among its students, motivating them to dive into their favorite books while working toward reading goals set by their teachers. This event not only fosters a sense of community but also encourages lifelong reading habits, reminding

students that reading is not just an academic skill but a source of joy and adventure. As they gather for this joyous occasion, students eagerly participate in friendly competitions between grade levels, ensuring that each Read-a-Thon is a celebration of creativity and imagination. With anticipation building, the school looks forward to inspiring young readers and creating lasting memories for years to come.

During the most recent Read-a-Thon, students embraced a variety of creative themes that turned reading into an unforgettable experience. Highlights included a Reading Pumpkin Patch, a Sports Competition where students donned jerseys and celebrated each completed book with touchdowns, and a cozy Camp Read-a-Lot, complete with tents, blankets, and even s'mores. One particularly festive theme was the

Halloween Reading Room, which added an extra layer of fun to the event.

Savanna Jackson, a fourth grade reading teacher, reflected on the event: “After a long week of DCA testing, we finished up the week relaxing and reading at Camp Read-a-Lot. Students enjoyed bringing their blankets, pillows, and hanging out around the campfires reading their favorite books. We also had a guest reader, Dr. Teresa Jackson, who shared her favorite book, Purple, Green, and Yellow by Gary Munsch.”

The Read-a-Thon is not only about reading; it’s also about setting and achieving goals. Sarah Smart, another third-grade teacher, recounted the competitive spirit of their first Read-a-Thon themed “Tackling AR! Crouch vs. Smart.” Students aimed to “tackle” their individual Accelerated Reader (AR) goals by reading consistently throughout the day. Guest readers included notable figures like Mrs. Lott, the GES 3-5 principal, and Eli Palmer, a local high school football star, who helped encourage students to embrace reading. “At the end of the day, we rewarded Mrs. Smart’s homeroom with mini foam footballs for reading a total of 382 books in one school day!” Smart exclaimed.

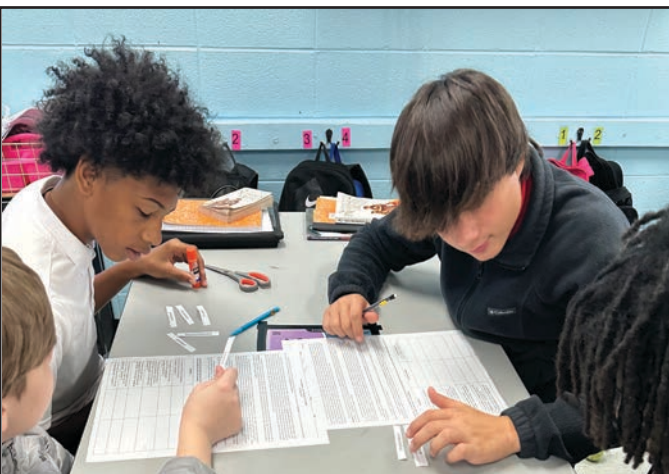
Chasity Johnson, the GES 3-5 librarian, proudly announced, “To learn to read is to light a fire... The Green Top

was on fire Friday, October 11, with the Read-a-Thon. The students were so excited to be a part of the event. GES 3-5 students read a total of 10,371 books! We are definitely moving in the right direction! #READERSGONNAREAD”

Haley Surrell, Grenada Elementary School 3-5 lead ELA teacher, reminisced about her own reading experiences and expressed hope for the impact of the Read-a-Thon: “I can vividly remember my favorite days of reading in elementary school that took place on free read days. I hope this is the feeling Read-a-Thon gives to our students at Grenada Elementary School 3-5. I hope they find books they love to read and continue reading the rest of their lives!”

The Read-a-Thon’s combination of fun, competition, and community support—including parents sending in supplies and volunteering as guest readers—makes it a cherished event at Grenada Elementary School 3-5. With each event, students are inspired to read more, achieve their goals, and develop a lifelong love for literature. The school community eagerly looks forward to the next Read-a-Thon, ready to dive into new adventures within the pages of their favorite books.

## Cut-and-Paste Not Just for Kindergarteners



(Photo left) Students (top, l to r) Micah Forrest and Hayden Chandler (bottom, l to r) Seth Brasher, Cody McCaskill work with cut and paste to convey tone.

By Tammie Cavanaugh  
Communicator Contributor

How do you make learning a skill in middle school more enjoyable? An activity of cut-and-paste, of course! Middle school students in language arts classes have been learning how writers choose words to convey tone, which helps tell the story in an interesting way. Being able to identify tone and use different sound devices to develop tone are part of the Mississippi College and Career Readiness Standards for English Language Arts.

Eighth-grade teacher Mrs. Harville shared how she worked with her classes identifying tone through a cut-and-paste activity. “I provided students with an excerpt from a story that was rich with opportunities for identifying tone,” she explained. “Different sentences were culled, and phrases were underlined for students to match the tone of the text to a word in a vocabulary list that conveyed that tone.”

Mrs. Harville reviewed the vocabulary words from the activity and read the paragraphs in the excerpt. Using a Kagan Cooperative Learning Structure called RallyCoach, she had students talk in their small groups about what the excerpt was mostly about, and then again as a class. Groups worked with partners to alternate matching a quote from the excerpt with a vocabulary word that conveyed the tone of the underlined phrase.

To complete the activity, Mrs. Harville modeled writing an impact statement that explained how the word choice impacted the meaning of the text, then had partners alternate writing their own impact statements using the RallyCoach Structure. The cut-and-paste activity with the Kagan Structure RallyCoach increased student engagement through hands-on interaction, discussion, and collaboration with peers. Students deepened their understanding of tone and the impact that word choice has on what we read.

## GETC Students Tour Nissan



GETC students (front, l to r) Peyton Bayless, Joshua Taylor, and Johnathan Dees, with (back) Instructor Tomeka Bacon recently toured Nissan.

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# Dr. David Daigneault Honored with Golden Lamp Award

By Carol Tharp  
GSD Administrator

Dr. David Daigneault, Superintendent of the Grenada School District, has been awarded the prestigious 2024-2025 Golden Lamp Award by the Mississippi Association of School Administrators (MASA). This esteemed recognition celebrates exceptional leadership and a steadfast commitment to enhancing education throughout Mississippi.

The Golden Lamp Award is reserved for those whose contributions have led to transformative outcomes for students, educators, and communities. Dr. Daigneault joins a distinguished lineage of educational leaders whose dedication has left a lasting mark on the state's educational landscape. The award not only highlights his individual achievements but also reflects the collective efforts of the Grenada School District in fostering innovative educational practices and improving student success. As a recipient of this honor, Dr. Daigneault exemplifies the qualities of vision, integrity, and an unwavering focus on student achievement that the Golden Lamp Award represents.

In accepting the honor, Dr. Daigneault expressed heartfelt gratitude, emphasizing that this recognition is not only a reflection of his personal efforts but also a testament to the collective spirit and dedication of the entire

Grenada School District family. "This award symbolizes the collaboration and unwavering commitment of our educators, students, and families," he stated warmly. He took a moment to pay special tribute to the many individuals who laid the groundwork for this achievement, acknowledging the invaluable support from both active and retired teachers, administrators, past and present school board members, and past superintendent Dr. Pender throughout the decades. Dr. Daigneault highlighted the profound influence of those who have contributed to the district's success, reminding the community of the strength that comes from working together toward a common goal.

Since taking on the role of Superintendent, Dr. Daigneault has amassed numerous accolades, demonstrating a relentless pursuit of excellence. He has served as an officer on several educational boards, including as President of MASA and the Mississippi Association of School Superintendents (MASS), and as a governing board member of the American Association of School Administrators (AASA). His leadership has propelled the Grenada School District to be named a District of Innovation in 2018, and for the first time in our history, the district earned an impressive A rating during the 2021-2022 school year—an achievement it continues to uphold.

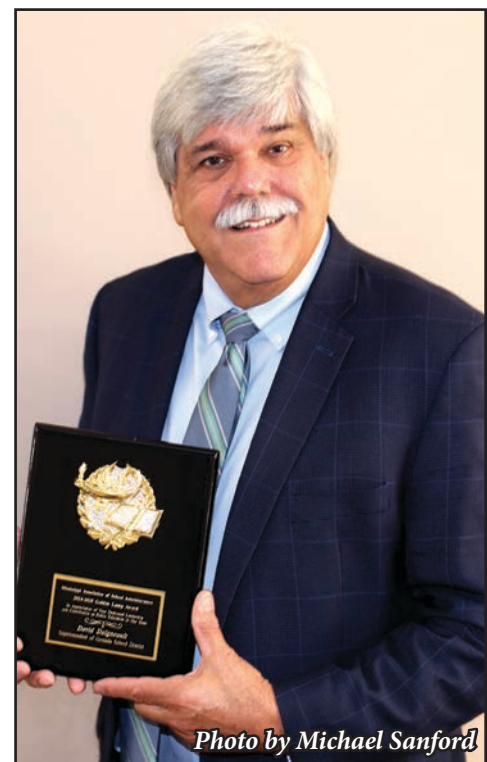
Dr. Daigneault's tenure is characterized by a focus on teamwork,

innovation, and shared success. He firmly believes that advancements in education stem from collective community efforts.

Under his guidance, the district has launched progressive initiatives aimed at enhancing student outcomes and teacher engagement, with special emphasis on career readiness, literacy, and STEM education.

Moreover, Dr. Daigneault has been instrumental in building partnerships with local businesses and community organizations, providing essential support as students transition from school to the workforce or higher education. His approach highlights collaboration and inclusivity, earning him respect within the Mississippi educational community.

As Dr. Daigneault continues to lead the Grenada School District, his commitment to fostering an environment of excellence remains unwavering, ensuring that students receive the education they deserve to thrive in an ever-evolving world. With an impressive 47 years of experience in public education, Dr. Daigneault has consistently gone above and beyond in his role, demonstrating a remarkable work ethic that inspires both students and staff alike. His profound love for the students, their families, and the entire school community is evident in every decision he makes and every initiative he undertakes. Known for his persistence in pursuing excellence, Dr. Daigneault embodies the belief that education is a



Superintendent Dr. David Daigneault accepts the Golden Lamp Award from the Mississippi Association of Administrators.

shared journey, and he is dedicated to empowering those around him to reach their full potential. His leadership not only shapes the present but also lays a strong foundation for a brighter future, reflecting his deep-rooted passion for making a meaningful difference in the lives of all within the Grenada School District.

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KAYLA NORMAN

GRENA DA HIGH SCHOOL

# One Skill at a Time: Skills Empower Students



By Sherry Worsham  
Director of Community Partnerships

In the current job market, where specialized skills are in high demand, gaining practical expertise in high school can significantly improve a student's trajectory — whether their goal is to pursue higher education or to step directly into a rewarding career. Schools like Grenada School District (GSD) provide a range of programs in fields such as culinary arts, welding, construction, technology, STEM, healthcare, arts, automotive, and athletics. These programs not only deepen academic knowledge but also equip students with hands-on skills that align with real-world expectations. The concept of developing “one skill at a time” encapsulates GSD's mission to prepare students for life beyond school by building both competency and confidence.

For industries like manufacturing and

technology, this approach of incremental skill mastery is transformational. By focusing on one area of expertise at a time, students acquire both theoretical understanding and the kind of practical experience that can make them stand out in the workforce. This focus on skills, which emphasizes the importance of hands-on learning, makes high school graduates more prepared and valuable to employers, underscoring the shift away from purely academic credentials to verified, practical know-how.

Certifications and micro-credentials, which many high school programs now offer, represent a tangible testament to students' readiness for the future. These credentials add weight to college applications and job applications alike, making students more attractive to admissions officers and potential employers. The assurance these certifications provide demonstrates to the wider world that these students are equipped to perform specialized

tasks, proving their commitment and capabilities in their chosen fields.

The skills students gain in high school also open doors to well-paying, part-time employment options, providing a leg up compared to jobs that don't require specific training. For instance, a student with culinary training could find employment in a restaurant kitchen, while someone skilled in automotive technology might secure a position in a repair shop. Not only do these jobs offer competitive wages, but they also provide practical experience directly related to students' career aspirations. As a result,

students leave high school not only with academic knowledge but also with skills that translate directly into increased career opportunities and success in both college and professional paths.

Through its emphasis on targeted skill development, GSD is paving the way for students to thrive in an ever-changing job market. Each specialized program enriches traditional learning, laying the groundwork for future success, and ensuring that every skill learned today will shape opportunities for tomorrow.

## Culinary Students Visit MUW



Photo by Meg Newcomb

Culinary Arts 2nd year students (l to r) Lexi Mabry, Isabella Ford, Lani Mabry, and Carly Parker take a break while visiting the Mississippi University for Women Culinary Arts Institute for their Discovery event. The W's culinary program was founded in 1996 and remains the state's only bachelor of science degree program in culinary arts.

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# 2024 GHS Homecoming



(Photo left)  
Senior maids (back, l to r) Leah Grace Briscoe, Trinity Davis, Mallory Ann Willis, Naima Sanaa Reed, Gabrielle Willis, Shaniyah Miers, Memrie Aunye, Caitlyn Symone Avery, (front, l to r) Children of the Court, Easton Henson and Jane Katherine Conrad.

*Photos by Torrance Studios*



Junior maids, Peyton Makyleigh Herrod, Julez Anne Moore, Madison Grace Woodard, and Va'shyla Cardajia Seeden



Sophomore maids, Madison Tylicia Alexander, Shakira Monae Alexander, Brooklyn Elise Hardwick, and Emma Kate Pitcock



(Photo left)  
Freshman maids, Lily Beth Williams, Ladasia Sharrell Hardiman, Addison Amari Hurd, and Tiyanna MarShae Amos

## GSD Livestream

How to find the Livestream  
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